AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD CLEAN WATER

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

DECEMBER 15, 1982

SERIAL NO. 97-H68

Printed for the use of the Committee on Environment and Public Works

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

13-545 O WASHINGTON: 1983

S321-10

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AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD CLEAN WATER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1982

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10:45 a.m., in room 4200, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John H. Chafee (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senator Chafee.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN H. CHAFEE, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Senator CHAFEE. Good morning everyone.

This morning, the subcommittee is meeting to receive testimony from Mr. Louis Harris about a poll he recently conducted on "American Attitudes Toward Clean Water." As I understand it, this poll was commissioned by the National Resources Council of America, represented here by Bill Reilly, the Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The National Resources Council is an umbrella organization of sportsmen groups, fishermen, hunters, and several resources organizations.

Over the years, we have seen attitude surveys toward clean air and natural resource questions but rarely on clean water. Mr. Harris, I would expect that your poll will spawn similar ones funded by other organizations. But it has been my feeling for a long time that the American people want clean water and are prepared to pay the price. My cursory reading of this poll leads me to believe that my instincts were correct. By a very wide margin, all sectors of society favor a strong national clean water effort.

The timing of this report is excellent. I want to compliment both of you. As you know, we tried to move limited Clean Water Act amendments earlier this year and were thwarted by the schedule. Next year, the act will be a priority of this committee. I expect that many amendments will come forward that attempt to significantly change the structure of the act. This survey will be strong medicine to those who will be proposing weakening amendments. I hope they review the survey carefully before burdening us with their amendments.

Mr. Harris, I want you to proceed and carefullly explain how these numbers were arrived at and the conclusions that you have drawn. Many will skeptically set aside your results and point to loaded questions or other things that they find objectionable. Please take your time to explain your results carefully because I want everyone to understand how you arrived at your results and why your favorable percentages are so startingly high.

Mr. Harris and I appeared jointly in a panel. To say it was a joint appearance is an overstatement on my part; it was Mr. Harris, with me also present.

Our first witness will be Mr. William K. Reilly, president of the Conservation Foundation, and chairman of the National Resources Council of America.

STATEMENT OF MR. WILLIAM K. REILLY, PRESIDENT, CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, AND CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL RESOURCES COUNCIL OF AMERICA

Mr. REILLY. Mr. Chairman, thank you. It is Lou Harris and me this morning, too. I appear simply to introduce him and to talk a little bit about the National Resources Council of America.

Senator CHAFEE. You were part of this operation. You paid for it.

Mr. REILLY. That is correct.

Senator CHAFEE. That gives you quite a standing in our view and in Mr. Harris' view.

Mr. REILLY. I am also president of the Conservation Foundation. I am appearing here as chairman of the National Resources Council of America which is an organization of approximately 50 conservation groups throughout the United States who came together in 1946 in NRCA to further communication, to cooperate on a variety of interests which they all share, and to promote coherence and community within the conservation organizations.

From time to time, we have addressed, through research, issues central to the concerns of all of our membership. We do not, however, take policy positions. We do not lobby—we do not litigate. We are a service organization. We recognize water, water quality, and water resources as central to the interests of the full spectrum of our 50 or so organizations.

Some 3 or 4 months ago, it occurred to us to sample the opinions of the American public on this important question. We engaged Lou Harris to do that. We went to him because of his well-known expertise and interest in national resources and environmental issues, but more important, because of his reputation for scrupulous rigor and professionalism in the conduct of public polls.

We supported this work out of the budget resources of the National Resources Council of America itself and with generous assistance from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association.

We are obviously pleased with the depth of concern that Americans have displayed and manifested in this poll in water quality and water resources. To address the methodology, the findings, and conclusions of the poll, I will turn to Lou Harris.

I should add, Mr. Chairman, that we are very conscious of the press of business right now and the other demands on your time and are grateful and honored to have the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

Senator CHAFEE. Thank you, Mr. Reilly. I apologize for the delay in starting this morning; we were here until a little before 2 last night. A measure that I am deeply committed to is coming up very soon on the floor. But this is important. We want to hear what you and Mr. Harris have to say.

So, Mr. Harris, go right to it.

STATEMENT OF LOUIS HARRIS, PRESIDENT, LOUIS HARRIS ASSOCIATES

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to be here today and to see you again. It is a privilege to come here to testify on the study and report on the public attitudes toward water pollution control and conservation which we have done for Mr. Reilly and his group.

Let me say, that categorically while we were engaged to do this, one of the ground rules which we have scrupulously followed, while we certainly had the help of our sponsors in terms of the findings of some of the more technical areas that we covered, in no shape or form did anyone from our sponsors influence the asking of the questions. If anything, we bent over backward to test the strength and viability of attitudes toward environmental control, making darn certain that things such as cost, practicality, and the whole series of other issues were taken into account.

Let me say right now at the outset, Mr. Chairman, if I might, that there have been a lot of questions which I have been confronted with, and I am sure you have as well, that say:

> Well, in a time of 10.8-percent unemployment, at a time of very hard economic strain that the country is going through, just how important is this environmental issue? Don't you think it really is of secondary importance and kind of take a hind seat while we give the top priority to getting the economy turned around?

I think this study went into that and we found, to put it in a nutshell, that 74 percent of the American adult population said it is very important in improving the quality of life in this country to strictly adhere to clean air and clean water standards. This is precisely the same number who said it is very important to the quality of life to make the economy grow.

I wouldn't make the contention here today that environmental matters have more importance than employment, but I would say that they are right up among the Nation's chief and major priorities.

What you find here in all of this is that the American people consistently have in the past and they do today reject the notion that we have a clearcut choice, a tradeoff, if you will, of jobs on the one hand or economic recovery on the other hand. It used to be getting enough energy on the one hand or having tough environmental standards that should be enforced, on the other.

We have asked that a half dozen different ways and we asked it on a trend basis back in 1975, the heart of another deep recession, and we asked it again this year. We said that, given the high cost involved, do you think that we ought to have a slow-down at the rate at which we clean up water pollution in order to get economy moving and to ease unemployment or do you think that we can have and do both? And the fascinating thing is that back 7 years ago I thought it was rather startling when we found that 64 to 22 percent, the majority of the American people said: "No, we will not make that tradeoff."

We think in a country as great as ours, even in hard economic times, we can get the economy recovered or on the way to recovery and we do not have to give up these gains that they hope will be made on environmental controls.

As of this year, 7 years later, Mr. Chairman, this has gone up by 89 to 6 percent who say they will not make this tradeoff.

What you find is again people say: "Well, isn't this kind of being for mother, God, and country? Isn't it a generalization" Everybody said: "Yes, clean up the environment." But when you get down to cases how solidly these majorities hold up, I can tell you by very solid majorities: 94 to 4 percent of the people think that disposal of hazardous wastes is a serious problem in this country.

Huge numbers, 93 to 6 percent, feel that toxic substances from factories in our lakes, rivers, streams, is a serious problem.

Eighty-eight to 10 percent view pollution by sewage as a serious problem.

Right down the line, people are worried about contaminated drinking water. They weren't before; they are now.

A decisive 88 to 11 majority thinks air pollution by industry is a serious problem.

Water shortages, 73 to 24 percent, are beginning to get the word that maybe we will have or have got a potable water shortage problem in this country.

The idea of air pollution by coal-burning electric plants, 70 to 25 percent, think is a serious problem.

And even the coal strip mining, 61 to 28 percent feel it is a serious issue.

Senator CHAFEE. You know, Mr. Harris, I would think these are so overwhelming that there would be the fear that the person is answering it in a bit of a vaccum in that they are for these things like they are for motherhood because they don't see any downside to it. But I think the fact that your poll is accurate is evident by the bond issues where people have to pay the price and people do reject bond issues because of the price. Yet, in the bond issues I see, at least in my State, I have not made a national survey on it; in my State, the environmental bond issues prevail every time despite being a blue-collar State that is very conscious of bond issues and frequently rejects them.

Mr. HARRIS. We laid that right on the line in the study. We asked people the approximate cost. As I understand it, per capita now in pollution control and environmental programs is close to $100, a little bit under. We asked people how they feel about paying another $100 tax on this and we got 70 percent of the American people saying they would be willing to pay another $100. We then went on to ask the others who had not said they would do it and what they would pay and in the end all we got was a very small 11 percent said they wouldn't pay any more; the rest would pay anywhere from $4 all the way up to $100.

This, Mr. Chairman, is something which is not unusual these days. It is very difficult indeed to get people in these hard times to say they want to pay more taxes. But in this case, they are willing to do it. I think that is one of the real tests.

All the way through the study, might I say, Mr. Chairman, that we asked a whole series of very tough questions, what I would call threshold questions, and just about every time out, we found the American people said: "Make these laws tougher, get cracking with this."

The change just in the past year has been enormous. For example, 1 year ago, we found by 91 percent that people said they wanted the Clean Water Act either kept as it was or strengthened and not eased. As of this past month, we found that 93 percent want the Clean Water Act passed as it is or strengthened, and the number that want to make the act tougher has gone up in the last 12 months from 50 to 62 percent. I find great significance in this because what it says: People are even more worried about the enforcement of the laws here but also about the laws themselves and the thrust is not: "Look, let's do some easing here." The thrust is: "Get tougher, get stricter." And this, I think, becomes a central finding. It is as though people have some real urgency about it.

For example, when we asked people if, by 1983, America's waters can be made "fishable" and "swimmable," I doubt there are many people who think that job can be finished in this next year—not the American people. By 78 to 17 percent, they think it can be done. And when they say: "Let's get tougher about it," they are saying: "We do not give our endorsement to the stewardship of these programs, but we give our endorsement to do something about them and, if necessary, make them tougher."

Not part of the study but a reading we got in October, Mr. Chairman, we asked how people would rate the Reagan administration on enforcing air and water enviromnental standards, and it came up 61 to 32 percent negative.

Senator CHAFEE. Is that in here?

Mr. HARRIS. It isn't in my testimony, no, Mr. Chairman, but I can give you all the full documentation on that.

Senator CHAFEE. What is that again?

Mr. HARRIS. Sixty-one to 32 percent negative on the Reagan administration enforcing air and water pollution environmental standards.

Senator CHAFEE. Did you find a variance nationally on the response to this in the great hearty West where they are less confronted by the immediacy of some of these problems? Are they more cavalier toward pollution control?

Mr. HARRIS. The people of the West feel more strongly than any other part of the country about environmental control.

Senator CHAFEE. By West, I was thinking more of what we would call, I quess, the mountain States—I am talking Montana, Wyoming.

Mr. HARRIS. The Mountain States and the west coast combined. They are now 19 percent of the country's population and they feel by 5 to 6 points on nearly every issue more strongly about tougher environmental standards. A great deal was made about these States, in effect, not having any Federal intervention; that is not the case. I can give you chapter and verse on that, if you would like. The West feels more keenly about this than other area.

Senator CHAFEE. By West, you would include California?

Mr. HARRIS. Yes. California, the Pacific Northwest.

Senator CHAFEE. You don't have a growth map that takes in what we call the Sagebrush Rebellion States; Montana, Wyoming, Idaho?

Mr. HARRIS. We have tested the Rebellion population. What we find, rather than these people saying: "Please turn loose standards to let us do what we want to do," what they want by every measure we have ever taken, they want the wilderness preserved more, they want the population controls before they get vast industrial development. If there is

rebellion, it is a rebellion against people deregulating the whole environment and letting anyone who wants to to come in and destroy.

Mr. Chairman, if I might, I would like to get down to some of the key issues on clean water because some of these are, I think, the nub of the question. One of them is this whole question of what is called BAT—best available technology. In 1977, as you know, there was an amendment to the Clean Water Act that specifies that factories must install the best available pollution control technology by 1984. Some industries—and that is not secret—would like to change the act so the Government can grant waivers or variances for BAT requirements.

Senator CHAFEE. Mr. Harris and Mr. Reilly, I have got a real problem. I am handling the opposition to a Buy America amendment, to which I am very much opposed, and, so, we are going to have a little shift here. Mr. Corcoran [1] will handle matters here, because we want what you have to say in the record, and then, hopefully, Senator Stafford will be coming over here.

I want to thank you and I want to thank Mr. Reilly and his group, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Fishing Tackle Association for funding this. I think this is helpful. I think you have something on the wetlands?

Mr. HARRIS. Yes, we do. I think that is very important.

Senator CHAFEE. How did it come out?

Mr. HARRIS. We get huge numbers. Actually, over 69 percent think wetlands preservation is important and they want no more cutbacks, to put it bluntly, in wetlands in this country.

Senator CHAFEE. This was a good poll to start with; I think it is even better now. Mr. Corcoran, why don't you take over now.

Mr. CORCORAN [presiding].

Mr. HARRIS. I will keep going.

I would like to get into this whole BAT subject, if I can. I would like to read the question we asked because you will see that if it is loaded, it is probably loaded against what might be viewed as the environmental cost.

The Clean Water Act now requires factories to install the latest, most effective systems available to clean up their toxic pollutants. Given the high cost of meeting this requirement, which one of the following policies do you think the Government should follow: Require all factories to install the best antipollution systems they say they can afford, or require all factories to install the best antipollution system available, except those factories which would be forced to shut down as a result, or require all factories to install the best antipollution systems available.

Irrespective of any affording or availability, we find a solid majority, 53 percent, said that you should not use the affordability or availability as criteria; you should say, categorically, they have to do this. So that people are very stubborn and unyielding on the whole subject of BAT.

We now asked the same type of question, we said:

Do you think factories should be required to install the best antipollution systems available, even if this meant that fewer jobs would be available or not?

And that certainly loads it up for jobs, but by 65 to 27 percent, a big majority said, make that BAT mandatory even if it means fewer jobs.

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[1] William M. Corcoran, professional staff member, Committee on Environment and Public Works.

In the West, as Senator Chafee referred to, by 75 to 18 percent, even much higher than the national average. Among union members, I find that significant because there have been groups like building trades and some others where, in the past, they have claimed that you have to bend environmental controls. We find union members, blue-collar people, city dwellers, feeling almost as strongly these days as any other group.

We asked another tradeoff, a choice between waiving BAT for toxic pollutants or causing the company involved to lose money, shut down the factory and lay off workers. I can't think of a more drastic downside. By 86 to 12 percent, there was no contest; they said no waivers or variances should be granted.

Another whole area, along with the BAT, is the question of cost-benefit analysis. And this one, I think, is just as critical because over and over again, I am sure you get this in the Senate and the House, people say: "Well, don't you think there should be some kind of cost parameters, cost containment, and if it gets beyond a certain cost, it is unreasonable and shouldn't you then say, enough is enough in terms of these environmental controls?"

Well, we asked people about this and we said:

Some people feel that the Government should not order industries to clean up their water pollution unless it can be shown that the benefits of the cleanup justify the costs involved. Others disagree and say the value of eliminating unsafe pollutants in water can't be measured in dollars. Would you favor changing the Clean Water Act so that the Government couldn't order an industry to clean up its water pollution if the costs didn't justify it, or would you oppose such a change in the Clean Water Act?

By 74 to 23 percent, a solid majority said they opposed changes even if the costs didn't justify it. I think by any measure, people mean business here and they mean it as tough as I think I have ever seen them on this subject or very many other subjects.

Safe drinking water is a fascinating one because we only find 7 percent saying that the drinking water coming out of the tap or faucet is not safe. Despite this confidence, 65 to 33 percent, a majority of the public wants to follow a policy in renewal of the Safe Drinking Water Act which comes up along with the Clean Water Act which states "contaminants in drinking water supplies ought to be cleaned up if there is any chance that they will be dangerous to human health, regardless of the cost."

I think right there is the key. People don't want to take the slightest risk or chance if they can help it. All things equal, what they are saying:

For heavens sake, let's close out as nearly as we humanly can the possibilities of contamination here because we are dealing with something that is vital to the life of each individual in this country and each household and the country.

Just to say that proof of clear danger is a signal to then take extreme measures to keep drinking water safe doesn't wash. People feel that is after the fact.

One interesting thing is, as I said, earlier, this willingness to pay another $100 in taxes. I can name only one other area that we have tested—and we have tested a lot—that they will do this and that is social security, and that is about the only other one. People will not do it for most programs in Government. They are not happy to be paying higher taxes, to say the least.

Now we finally get to the one I wish the chairman had been here for, the wetlands preservation. We felt we had to define what wetlands were, and in asking the question, what I did was to take the Army Corps of Engineers' definition of wetlands which I thought might be a fair definition given the fact that there is some dispute over just how much the Corps of Engineers really are in sync with the intention of the Wetland Act. It really says, almost no matter how you asked this, 83 percent of the public feels it is very important, and when you add in those who say it is somewhat important, you get the nearly unanimous 91 to 3 percent say they do not want any easing of standards in the preservation of the wetlands. When asked whom they would trust more to maintain the strict standards for preserving the Nation's wetlands—Government officials at the Federal or at the State and local level—we find it fascinating, we got a standoff, 48 to 48 percent.

Let me say this is one I view as the most surprising and major findings of the study because certainly one of the tacit assumptions that people have made in the whole environmental area, has been, if you favor tough Federal standards, it means that you really favor more strict enforcement, that being for more State and local standards and an easing of Federal jurisdictions and controls has been taken, I think, pretty widely to mean that you are going to get a diffusion of control and, in effect, easing of the standards. You might end up with 50 different standards of variable quality in the State as opposed to one basic overall Federal standard on a great many things. Lo and behold, we find men much more inclined toward tougher environmental control—they now favor by 55 to 41 percent tougher Federal controls rather than State and local. Women who are much more proenvironmental controls, now favor local control by 56 to 40 percent. Conservatives say they would trust Federal officials more than they would State and local officials. Moderates feel just the opposite. People in the South—Senator Chafee has asked me about other regions—the South comes in less strongly than other regions in terms of their fierceness about environmental controls.

I must say, if some of these toxic spills—such as 20,000 people evacuating their homes in Louisiana the other week—continue, I think the South may catch up. Nonetheless, the South is lower and yet the South supports Federal enforcement more than any other region.

The answer, I think, may lie in the perceived changing role of the Federal Government under the Reagan administration. Those in charge of running environmental programs in Washington, they are widely viewed as wanting to ease strict enforcement of Federal environmental controls.

As I reported earlier, in another study we did, by 61 to 32 percent, this administration comes up with a negative rating on how well it has enforced environmental standards. In turn, what you find is that people are saying:

Well, we can pass the toughest law that we have ever had but unless those who have taken an oath to enforce the law actually do enforce it and not, in a sense, commit errors of omission which is just as conveniently saying, we are not going to enforce it down the line, then people get very worried not just of the Federal control but of any controls.

Let me say the answer then isn't that people would therefore like no regulations at all. I would say what emerges just as clearly to me as anything is that people not only want tough laws and tougher laws right up and down the line, but they want tough enforcement. In other words, they want enforcement to match the stiffness of the law. What they are saying is that they believe in law and order in this country every bit as much as police officers enforcing the law in crime or Federal officials who will enforce the laws on environmental controls. And that has become, obviously, an emerging and major issue.

I think as the congressional process deals with the renewal of the Water Act, the alert public will be looking very much over your shoulder, not only in how well the basic provisions of the act are kept and even more strengthened, but then what safeguards are included, but oversight may be put into legislation by the Congress in order to be sure that those strict standards are enforced.

Thank you.

Mr. CORCORAN. Thank you.

If there are any questions from the committee, they will be supplied for the record rather than asking you.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m., the subcommittee recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

[Mr. Harris' prepared statement follows:]

LOUIS HARRIS TESTIMONY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION
OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC WORKS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DECEMBER 15, 1982

IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE HERE TODAY TO REPORT TO YOU ON A STUDY OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AND CONSERVATION OF WATER RESOURCES OUR FIRM CONDUCTED FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL OF AMERICA. THE TIME SPENT ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION, QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT, FIELD WORK, COMPUTERIZATION, AND ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY BEGAN IN JUNE AND ENDED IN LATE NOVEMBER. THE SURVEY WAS BASICALLY CONDUCTED AMONG A CROSS-SECION OF 1,253 ADULTS NATIONWIDE. THIS SURVEY WAS PAID FOR BY THE NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL OF AMERICA, THE FISHING TACKLE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION, AND THE ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND. IN THE END, OR COURSE, THE SUBSTANCE AND METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED ARE THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HARRIS FIRM.

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CLAIMS ONE HEARS IS THAT WHILE IT IS DESIRABLE TO CLEAN UP THE ENVIRONMENT, THE PUBLIC GIVES SUCH EFFORTS AT BEST A SECONDARY PRIORITY. IN TIMES OF UNEMPLOYMENT, THE PLEA IS THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP MUST WAIT UNTIL THERE ARE ENOUGH JOBS, OR THE CLEAN-UP OUGHT TO BE DELAYED OR EASED TO PRESERVE JOBS. IN TIMES OF ENERGY SHORTAGES THE EFFORTS TO CLEAN UP THE ENVIRONMENT ARE ASKED TO WAIT ONCE AGAIN UNTIL ENOUGH ABUNDANT ENERGY IS AVAILABLE.

WELL, IN THIS STUDY, WE HAVE SOME DEFINITIVE LIGHT TO SHED ON SUCH CLAIMS. CURBING WATER POLLUTION IS NAMED BY A SUBSTANTIAL 74% OF THE ADULT POPULATION AS "VERY IMPORTANT' IN MAKING THE QUALITY OF LIFE "BETTER". ——→

THIS IS TWO POINTS ABOVE A COMPARABLE 72% WHO SAID THE SAME ABOUT CURBING AIR POLLUTION. WHILE A BIT LOWER THAN THE 83% WHO GIVE HIGH IMPORTANCE TO CURBING INFLATION AND THE 79% WHO SAY THE SAME ABOUT BRINGING INTEREST RATES DOWN, CURBING WATER POLLUTION IS VIEWED AS EQUAL IN IMPORTANCE TO ECONOMIC GROWTH, ALSO CITED BY 74% AS VERY IMPORTANT, AND OUTSCORES THE 65% WHO FELT THAT WAY ABOUT PRODUCING MORE ENERGY, AND THE 68% WHO SAID THE SAME ABOUT MAKING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SAFER.

THE INESCAPABLE POINT IS THAT CURBING BOTH AIR AND WATER POLLUTION ARE GIVEN A HIGH PRIORITY OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR OWN RIGHT BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THE BASIC TRUTH, HOWEVER, IS THAT BY A SIZABLE MARGIN, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DO NOT FEEL THEY MUST OPT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, ON THE ONE HAND, OR AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP, ON THE OTHER. OR, OF FINDING JOBS TO EASE UNEMPLOYMENT, ON THE ONE HAND, AND AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP ON THE OTHER. BACK IN 1975, WE FOUND THAT BY 64-22%, A SOLID MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC THEN REJECTED THE NOTION THAT IT WAS "NECESSARY TO SLOW DOWN THE RATE AT WHICH WE CLEAN UP WATER POLLUTION IN ORDER TO GET THE ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN AND TO EASE UNEMPLOYMENT." NOW, SOME 7 YEARS LATER, IN 1982, SENTIMENT HAS GROWN EVEN MORE OVERWHELMING: BY 89-6%, ALMOST ALL AMERICANS ARE CONVINCED THAT SUCH A TRADE OFF IS NOT NECESSARY, BECAUSE THEY ARE FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT WE CAN "GET THE ECONOMY GOING AGAIN AND ALSO CLEAN UP WATER POLLUTION." ——————————→

NOT ONLY ARE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN FAVOR OF GIVING A HIGH PRIORITY TO AN ONGOING AND TOUGH PROGRAM TO CLEAN UP THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT THEY HAVE A WHOLE ROSTER OF SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS THEY WANT TO SEE ADDRESSED:

-- BY 95-4%, ALMOST EVERYONE FEELS THAT DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS WASTES IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN AMERICA.

-- BY 93-6%, AN ALMOST IDENTICAL MAJORITY FEELS THAT THE POLLUTION OF LAKES AND RIVERS BY TOXIC SUBSTANCES FROM FACTORIES IS A SERIOUS NATIONAL PROBLEM.

-- BY 88-10%, ANOTHER SIZABLE MAJORITY VIEWS POLLUTION OF LAKES AND RIVERS BY SEWAGE AS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE COUNTRY.

-- BY 84-14%, A BIG MAJORITY FEEL THAT CONTAMINATED DRINKING WATER IS A SERIOUS NATIONAL PROBLEM.

-- BY 88-11%, A DECISIVE MAJORITY BELIEVES THAT AIR POLLUTION BY INDUSTRY IS A GENERALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY.

-- BY 73-24%, A CLEAR MAJORITY FEELS THAT WATER SHORTAGES ARE A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN AMERICA.

-- BY 80-18%, A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY IS CONVINCED THAT AIR POLLUTION BY TRUCKS AND AUTOMOBILES IS A SERIOUS NATIONAL PROBLEM.

-- BY 70-25%, A MAJORITY FEEL THAT AIR POLLUTION BY COAL-BURNING ELECTRIC PLANTS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE NATION.

-- FINALLY, BY 61-28%, A SOLID MAJORITY OF AMERICANS FEEL THAT DAMAGE TO THE LANDSCAPE BY COAL STRIP MINING CONSTITUTES A SERIOUS NATIONAL PROBLEM.

OBVIOUSLY, ALL NINE OF THESE SPECIFIC ISSUES TESTED IN THIS SURVEY ARE VIEWED AS BEING SERIOUS IN THE COUNTRY TODAY. FOUR OF THE NINE, HOWEVER, RECEIVE SPECIAL AND URGENT SINGLING OUT BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS WASTES IS SEEN AS "VERY SERIOUS" BY 74% OF THE ENTIRE PUBLIC NATIONWIDE; 65% SAY THE SAME ABOUT POLLUTION OF LAKES AND RIVERS BY TOXIC SUBSTANCES; 62% SAY THAT POLLUTION OF LAKES AND RIVERS BY SEWAGE IS "VERY SERIOUS"; AND 56% FEEL THE SAME ABOUT CONTAMINATED DRINKING WATER. PUT IT THIS WAY, BIG MAJORITIES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE CONVINCED THAT DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS WASTES CONSTITUTES A VERY SERIOUS HAZARD ANYWHERE IN THE U.S., AS IS THE CASE WITH TOXIC WASTE POLLUTANTS, SEWAGE POLLUTION, OR WATER CONTAMINATION. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT MOST PEOPLE FEEL THAT THEIR OWN HOME AREA IS NECESSARILY FACED WITH CRISES SUCH AS THESE. INDEED, 46% FEEL THAT POLLUTION OF THEIR OWN LAKES AND RIVERS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM, 44% THAT POLLUTION BY TOXIC WASTES IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM WHERE THEY LIVE, 33% ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR OWN DRINKING WATER BEING POLLUTED, AND 28% BELIEVE THEY ARE BESET WITH WATER SHORTAGES IN THEIR HOME AREA.

NOW, THE FACT THAT MINORITIES, NOT MAJORITIES, FEEL THESE PROBLEMS ARE SERIOUS IN THEIR AREA SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THE PROBLEMS ARE THEREFORE NOT SERIOUS FOR THE NATION. OBVIOUSLY, WHEN PROBLEMS AS SERIOUS AS THESE ARE BELIEVED TO EXIST IN THEIR HOME AREAS, THEN IT IS A MATTER REQUIRING HIGHLY URGENT ACTION. THE REAL WORRY PEOPLE HAVE IS A SENSE OF SHOCK THAT SUCH POLLUTION CAN EXIST ANYWHERE IN THE U.S. AND THE OVERHANGING WORRY THAT THEIR AREA COULD BE AFFLICTED BY THEM NEXT. INDEED, WHEN ASKED WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THEIR OWN STREAMS, LAKES AND RIVERS OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS, 46% NATIONWIDE REPORT

WHERE THEY LIVE THEY ARE MORE POLLUTED NOW, ONLY 17% SAY LESS, AND 30% THE SAME. AND, LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT 10 YEARS, 44% FEEL THEIR OWN STREAMS, LAKES, AND RIVERS WILL BE MORE POLLUTED, ONLY 17% FEEL THEY WILL BE LESS POLLUTED, WHILE 34% ANTICIPATE NO REAL CHANGE. SUCH RESULTS UNDERSCORE THE CONCERN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE THAT THEIR BASIC WATER RESOURCES ARE THREATENED BY POLLUTION AND CONSTANT AND TOUGH MEASURES MUST BE TAKEN TO KEEP THEM CLEAN OR TO CLEAN THEM UP.

SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE JUST THIS YEAR IN BASIC ATTITUDES ABOUT EXTENSION OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT. LAST YEAR, ONLY A VERY SMALL 6% OF THE PUBLIC NATIONWIDE FELT THAT FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION STANDARDS WERE OVERLY PROTECTIVE. NOW, AN EVEN SMALLER 4% FEEL THAT WAY. A YEAR AGO, 43% FELT THAT FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION STANDARDS WERE "JUST ABOUT RIGHT", BUT THE NUMBER WHO FEEL THAT WAY NOW HAS DROPPED TO 34%. THE BIG MOVEMENT HAS BEEN ON THE DIMENSION "NOT PROTECTIVE ENOUGH", WHICH HAS JUMPED FROM 48 TO 59%, JUST IN ONE YEAR. I BELIEVE THE CLEAR IMPLICATION FROM THIS SHIFT IS NOT SIMPLY THAT THE NUMBER WHO REJECT THE CLAIM THAT THE FEDERAL LAW IS OVERLY PROTECTIVE HAS GONE FROM 91-6% TO 93-4%, BUT THAT THERE IS GROWING AND DEEP CONCERN THAT WHILE THE STANDARDS MAY BE VERY GOOD, INDEED, THE ENFORCEMENT OF THOSE STANDARDS HAS DETERIORATED, AS CONTROL OF THE FEDERAL ESTABLISHMENT HAS FALLEN INTO HANDS LESS THAN FULLY IN ACCORD WITH THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT OF 1972.

WHEN WE ASK DIRECTLY ABOUT THE CLEAN WATER ACT, A 94-3% NEARLY UNANIMOUS MAJORITY WANTS IT KEPT AT LEAST AS TOUGH AND INDEED, FULLY 60% WANT TO MAKE IT "STRICTER."——————————→

WANT TO MAKE IT "STRICTER." LAST YEAR, A COMPARABLE 93-4% MAJORITY SHARED THE SAME VIEW, BUT THE NUMBER WHO WANTED THE LAW MORE STRICT WAS A LOWER 52%. THUS, THE SENTIMENT FOR MAKING CLEAN WATER TOUGHER RATHER THAN EASING IT HAS RISEN FROM 52 TO 60% IN A YEAR. NOR ARE PEOPLE IN A TEMPORIZING MOOD ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS. EVEN THOUGH NOT MANY EXPERTS THINK THAT ALL THE NATION'S WATERS WILL BE MADE "FISHABLE" AND "SWIMMABLE" BY 1983, AS SET FORTH IN THE ORIGINAL CLEAN WATER ACT, BY 78-17%, A BIG MAJORITY ARE CONVINCED THAT THE JOB CAN BE DONE. THE PUBLIC HAS BOTH THE FAITH THAT THE TASK CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED AND IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO GETTING THE JOB DONE.

THUS, MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, ANY EFFORT TO WEAKEN OR TO EASE THE CLEAN WATER ACT WILL BE VIEWED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AS A SERIOUS AND INEXCUSABLE VIOLATION OF A CLEARLY EXPRESSED AND DEEPLY FELT PUBLIC MANDATE.

NOW, LET'S GET DOWN TO SOME OF THE RAZOR'S EDGE ISSUES THAT ARE THE HEART OF THE BATTLE OVER CLEAN WATER TODAY. ONE OF THE 1977 AMENDMENTS TO THE CLEAN WATER ACT, AS YOU KNOW, SPECIFIES THAT FACTORIES MUST INSTALL THE BEST AVAILABLE POLLUTION CONTROL TECHNOLOGY (BAT) BY 1984. SOME INDUSTRIES WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE THE ACT SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD GRANT WAIVERS OR VARIANCES FROM THE BAT REQUIREMENT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. WE ASKED A QUESTION ABOUT THIS MATTER IN A WAY THAT BENT FAR OVER BACKWARDS TO GET THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE OPPOSITION TO BAT INTO THE QUERY. WE ASKED: "THE CLEAN WATER ACT NOW REQUIRES FACTORIES TO INSTALL THE LATEST, MOST EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO CLEAN UP THEIR TOXIC POLLUTANTS. ——————→

GIVEN THE HIGH COST OF MEETING THIS REQUIREMENT, WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING POLICIES DO YOU THINK THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FOLLOW -- REQUIRE ALL FACTORIES TO INSTALL THE BEST ANTI-POLLUTION SYSTEMS THEY SAY THEY CAN AFFORD, OR REQUIRE ALL FACTORIES TO INSTALL THE BEST ANTI-POLLUTION SYSTEM AVAILABLE, EXCEPT THOSE FACTORIES WHICH WOULD BE FORCED TO SHUT DOWN AS A RESULT, OR REQUIRE ALL FACTORIES TO INSTALL THE BEST ANTI-POLLUTION SYSTEMS AVAILABLE", THE LAST OBVIOUSLY WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTIONS OR EXEMPTIONS BASED ON COST. WELL, NO MORE THAN 21% OPTED FOR INSTALLING BAT ON THE BASIS OF WHAT THEY CAN AFFORD, AND 23% MORE OPTED FOR BAT, EXCEPT WHEN IT WOULD MAKE THE PLANT CLOSE DOWN. A SOLID 53% MAJORITY SAID IT SHOULD BE MANDATORY THAT BAT BE INSTALLED, REGARDLESS OF COST OR CONSEQUENCES.

WE ASKED MUCH THE SAME TYPE OF QUESTION, WHEN WE QUERIED THE CROSS-SECTION: "DO YOU THINK FACTORIES SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO INSTALL THE BEST ANTI-POLLUTION SYSTEMS AVAILABLE, EVEN IF THIS MEANT THAT FEWER JOBS WOULD BE AVAILABLE OR NOT?" BY 65-27% NATIONWIDE, A BIG MAJORITY SAID PUT IN BAT, EVEN IF THAT MEANS FEWER JOBS. ALL GROUPS FAVOR BAT BY MARGINS OF 2 TO 1 OR BETTER. IN THE WEST, THEY SUPPORT IT BY 75-18%, AMONG UNION MEMBERS A 65-28% MAJORITY FAVOR BAT, AND SKILLED LABOR OPTS FOR IT BY 73-21%.

WE THEN ASKED ANOTHER TRADE-OFF, OFFERING PEOPLE A CHOICE BETWEEN WAIVING BAT FOR TOXIC POLLUTANTS OR CAUSING THE COMPANY INVOLVED TO LOSE MONEY, SHUT DOWN THE FACTORY, AND LAY OFF WORKERS. BY AN OVERWHELMING 86-12%, PEOPLE SAID THAT THE WAIVER OR VARIANCE SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED.

IN THIS SURVEY, WE PROBED IN CONSIDERABLE DEPTH ON THE ISSUE OF COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS, ANOTHER OF THE KEY AND PIVOTAL ISSUES AT STAKE IN THE CLEAN WATER DEBATE. WE ASKED: "SOME PEOPLE FEEL THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT ORDER INDUSTRIES TO CLEAN UP THEIR WATER POLLUTION UNLESS IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT THE BENEFITS OF THE CLEANUP JUSTIFY THE COSTS INVOLVED. OTHERS DISAGREE AND SAY THE VALUE OF ELIMINATING UNSAFE POLLUTANTS IN WATER CAN'T BE MEASURED IN DOLLARS. WOULD YOU FAVOR CHANGING THE CLEAN WATER ACT SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T ORDER AN INDUSTRY TO CLEAN UP ITS WATER POLLUTION IF THE COSTS DIDN'T JUSTIFY IT, OR WOULD YOU OPPOSE SUCH A CHANGE IN THE CLEAN WATER ACT?" BY A STRIKING 74-23%, A SOLID MAJORITY SAY THEY WOULD OPPOSE CHANGES EVEN IF THE COST DIDN'T JUSTIFY IT. OBVIOUSLY, PEOPLE MEAN BUSINESS ON THE SUBJECT OF CLEANING UP WATER POLLUTION.

OR TAKE THE CASE OF SAFE DRINKING WATER. BY 92-7%, A BIG MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC REPORTS THAT DRINKING WATER THAT COMES OUT OF THEIR TAP OR FAUCET IN THEIR HOME IS EITHER "VERY" OR "PRETTY" SAFE. DESPITE THIS CONFIDENCE, NONETHELESS, BY 65-33% A SOLID 2 TO 1 MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC WANT TO FOLLOW A POLICY IN THE RENEWAL OF THE SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT THAT IS ALSO UP FOR REAUTHORIZATION WHICH STATES "CONTAMINANTS IN DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES OUGHT TO BE CLEANED UP IF THERE IS ANY CHANCE THAT THEY WILL BE DANGEROUS TO HUMAN HEALTH, REGARDLESS OF THE COST." EVEN THOUGH THEY THINK THEIR DRINKING WATER SUPPLY IS SAFE, PEOPLE WANT TO TAKE ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCES WITH THEIR DRINKING WATER WHERE HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY ARE CONCERNED. ANY PROVISION THAT REQUIRES PROOF OF "CLEAR DANGER" WILL MEET WITH STIFF PUBLIC RESISTANCE.

NOW, BY 1987, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE TOTAL COST OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CURRENT STANDARDS OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT WILL BE $20.4 BILLION, WHICH WORKS OUT TO LESS THAN $100 FOR EVERY PERSON IN THE COUNTRY. IT IS FAIR TO ASSUME THAT CONSUMERS DO END UP PAYING MUCH OF THE COST THROUGH HIGHER PRICES IN PRODUCTS AND HIGHER TAXES. THUS, IT IS NOT UNCOMMON TO HEAR THIS KIND OF ARGUMENT, "IT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD THAT THE PUBLIC WANTS STRICT ANTI-POLLUTION LAWS AND REGULATIONS, BUT IF THEY AREN'T WILLING TO FOOT THE BILL FOR THESE EFFORTS, THEY CAN HARDLY EXPECT TO SEE THE GOVERNMENT KEEP EXISTING LAWS AND REGULATION AS TOUGH AS THEY ARE NOW." FURTHERMORE, IT'S EASY FOR PEOPLE TO SAY THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO SEE SACRIFICES MADE FOR THE SAKE OF CLEANER WATER -- BUT THEY'D FEEL DIFFERENTLY IF THEY KNEW IT MEANT MONEY COMING OUT OF THEIR POCKETS."

IN THIS SURVEY, PEOPLE WERE ASKED BLUNTLY IF THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY $100 A YEAR MORE IN TAXES AND HIGHER PRICES FOR CLEAN AND SAFE WATER. BY A THUMPING 70-26%, A SOLID MAJORITY SAID THEY WERE WILLING TO PAY THE EXTRA $100. EVEN AMONG THE 26% WHO WOULDN'T PAY THE $100, ONLY 11% ARE DIE-HARDS WHO WOULDN'T PAY SOMETHING LESS THAN $100 MORE TO KEEP WATER CLEAN AND SAFE.

ANOTHER SECTION OF THIS STUDY DEALS WITH THE ROUGHLY 70 MILLION ACRES OF WETLANDS AND THEIR PRESERVATION. A SUBSTANTIAL 83% OF THE PUBLIC NATIONWIDE FEELS IT IS "VERY IMPORTANT" TO "KEEP THE WETLANDS FREE FROM FURTHER DESTRUCTION." ——————————————————————→

A BIG 69% WANT SUCH FEDERAL STANDARDS OVER THE WETLANDS MADE MORE STRICT AND 22% MORE WANT THEM KEPT AS THEY HAVE BEEN. ONLY 3% WANT THEM LESS STRICT. THUS, BY 91-3%, AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN GENERAL DOES NOT WANT ANY EASING OF STANDARDS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE WETLANDS.

HOWEVER, WHEN ASKED WHOM THEY WOULD TRUST MORE TO MAINTAIN STRICT STANDARDS FOR PRESERVING THE NATION'S WETLANDS -- GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AT THE FEDERAL OR AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL -- THE RESULT WAS A STAND-OFF: 48% PREFERRED FEDERAL AND 48% PREFERRED STATE AND LOCAL STANDARDS TO PREVAIL.

FOR MANY YEARS, IT HAS BEEN ASSUMED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL AREA THAT ADVOCACY OF FEDERAL AUTHORITY ON STANDARDS AND ENFORCEMENT MEANT STANDING FOR TOUGH AND STRICT RULES GOVERNING POLLUTION. ADVOCACY FOR STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL, FAVORED BY MANY INDUSTRY GROUPS AND THOSE OPPOSED TO THE CLEAN AIR AND CLEAN WATER ACTS, WAS TAKEN TO MEAN MORE VARIABLE STANDARDS AND MORE DIFFUSED ENFORCEMENT. IN THIS SURVEY, THESE ASSUMPTIONS MAY WELL BE CAST IN DOUBT. FOR EXAMPLE, BY 55-41%, MEN WHO ARE LESS INCLINED TOWARD TOUGHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS, FAVOR FEDERAL RATHER THAN STATE AND LOCAL ENFORCEMENT OF WETLANDS STANDARDS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WOMEN, WHO ARE MUCH MORE PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS, FAVOR STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL BY 56-40%. CONSERVATIVES FAVOR FEDERAL CONTROLS, WHILE MODERATES FAVOR STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL OVER WETLANDS. PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH, WHERE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ARE NOT AS HIGH AS IN OTHER REGIONS, FAVOR FEDERAL ENFORCEMENT, WHILE PEOPLE IN THE WEST, WHERE SUPPORT FOR TOUGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS IN HIGHEST, SUPPORT STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL BY 51-43%. ——————————→

I BELIEVE THE ANSWER MAY LIE IN THE PRECEIVED CHANGING ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNDER THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION. THOSE IN CHARGE OF RUNNING ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS IN WASHINGTON TODAY ARE WIDELY VIEWED AS WANTING TO EASE STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT STRICT ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS, BUT ALSO ARE FEARFUL THAT THOSE NOW VESTED WITH RESPONSIBILITY OF SETTING AND ENFORCING STANDARDS ARE QUITE DEDICATED TO DOING JUST THE OPPOSITE. IN TURN, THIS HAS MOOTED AND CLOUDED ANY CLEAR-CUT CHOICE IN THE FEDERAL VS. STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL ISSUE. OBVIOUSLY, THE PUBLIC WOULD LIKE TO HAVE CONTINUATION OF FEDERAL CONTROLS, BUT IS WORRIED THAT THOSE NOW IN AUTHORITY WILL NOT ENFORCE EITHER THE SPIRIT OR THE LETTER OF THE LAW.

AS THE CONGRESSIONAL PROCESS DEALS WITH RENEWAL OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT, AN ALERT PUBLIC WILL BE DRAWING A JUDGMENT NOT ONLY ON HOW WELL THE BASIC PROVISIONS OF THE ACT ARE KEPT AND STRENGTHENED, BUT ALSO WHAT SAFEGUARDS ARE INCLUDED TO MAKE CERTAIN STRICT STANDARDS ARE ENFORCED.

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